

Message Text

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S E C R E T MOSCOW 9160

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JR, US

SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR U.S.- SOVIET RELATIONS

1. SINCE MY RETURN FROM WASHINGTON I HAVE GIVEN CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT TO THE PROSPECTS FOR U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS AND HAVE CONCLUDED THAT FURTHER DETERIORATION IS LIKELY IN THE NEAR TERM. THIS FEELING IS PREDICATED ON THE FOLLOWING JUDGMENTS:

(A) THE SOVIETS ARE SHOWING NO REAL SIGNS OF MOVEMENT ON THE BASIC SALT ISSUES. (SOVIET RIGIDITY WAS EXEMPLIFIED AGAIN BY KORNIYENKO WHEN WARNKE AND I MET WITH HIM JUNE 23.) EVEN THOUGH THE SOVIETS MAY EVENTUALLY MOVE ON THE CORE ISSUES, THEY ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE THE STONEWALL FOR AT LEAST A FEW MONTHS.

(B) I SEE NO REALISTIC PROSPECT OF CONVENING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE THIS YEAR, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF BEGIN'S ELECTION. THIS IS, OF COURSE MATTER OF CARDINAL IMPORTANCE FOR SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY.

(C) GIVEN OUR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS, THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE IS LIKELY TO ADD TO US-SOVIET TENSIONS. IN GENERAL SOVIETS ARE
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STILL INCLINED TO PERCEIVE OUR POLICIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AS DIRECTED SPECIFICALLY AT THEM, AND THEIR REACTION HAS BEEN HIGHLY EMOTIONAL. AND THERE IS ALWAYS THE CHANCE THAT OUR RELATIONS MAY BE FURTHER EXACERBATED BY TOUGHER SOVIET MEASURES AGAINST THE DISSIDENTS - E.G. A SHARANSKY SHOW TRIAL.

(D) WE HAVE NO PRACTICAL PROSPECT OF MOVING THIS YEAR TOWARD

ADAPTION OF THE JACKSON-VANIK AMENDMENT TO PERMIT EXTENSION OF MFN TREATMENT AND TO BRING 1972 TRADE AGREEMENT INTO EFFECT-- AND THE SOVIET, WRONGLY OF COURSE, HOLD THE ADMINISTRATION RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS.

(E) PROSPECTS FOR AN EARLY BREAKTHROUGH IN THE MBFR TALKS SEEM VIRTUALLY NIL.

(F) DESPITE BREZHNEV'S VERY STRONG INTERNAL POSITION IN EVERY FORMAL SENSE, HIS STAMINA AND HEALTH--APPARENTLY NOW WORSE JUDGING FROM PARIS REPORTS--REMAIN LARGE QUESTIONS. IF, AS IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE, SUCCESSION MANEUVERING HAS BEGUN BEHIND THE SCENES, THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP WILL BE IN A POOR POSITION TO MAKE HARD AND CONTROVERSIAL DECISIONS.

2. NONE OF THE ABOVE IS MEANT TO SUGGEST THAT WE ARE ON THE WRONG TRACK IN ANY IMPORTANT WAY. ON THE CONTRARY, I BELIEVE THAT OUR POSITIONS ON THE KEY ISSUES ARE FAIR AND DEFENSIBLE AND FURTHERMORE THAT BASIC POWER FACTORS ARE MOVING IN OUR DIRECTION. WE SHOULD, HOWEVER, BE PREPARED TO BATTEN THE HATCHES IF NECESSARY FOR A FEW MONTHS AND GIVE THE LOGIC OF THE SITUATION TIME TO PENETRATE THE SLUGGISH MENTAL PROCESSES OF THE SOVIET LEADERS. AFTER ALL, SOVIET CONCERN ABOUT CHINA AND THE STATE OF THE SOVIET ECONOMY CAN BE EXPECTED ULTIMATELY TO FORCE THE SOVIETS TO BE REASONABLE IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH US.

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3. I CONTINUE TO BE STRUCK BY BASIC SOVIET MISPERCEPTIONS OF THE PRESIDENT AND HIS ADMINISTRATION. THESE INVOLVE BOTH OUR INTENTIONS AND OUR DETERMINATION TO STICK WITH THE POLICIES WE HAVE ENUNCIATED. SOVIET MISUNDERSTANDINGS ON THIS SCORE ARE COMING THROUGH TO US HERE, AND I NOTE THAT THEY WERE ALSO CONVEYED FORCEFULLY TO GISCARD AND TO GENSCHER. FOR THIS REASON, I AM EVEN MORE CONVINCED THAT A MEETING BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND BREZHNEV BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR WOULD BE USEFUL SINCE THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP IS UNLIKELY TO DEVELOP CONFIDENCE IN ITS ABILITY TO DEAL WITH US UNTIL THEY HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE THEIR MEASURE OF THE PRESIDENT BY DIRECT CONTACT. I WOULD THEREFORE URGE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO SUCH A MEETING, ALTHOUGH WE SHOULD AVOID PRESSING SO HARD THAT WE PLACE OURSELVES IN THE ROLE OF DEMANDEUR.

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